

LA MENTATIONS.

INTRODUCTION.

THE prophecy of Jeremiah is immediately followed in the English Version by five lyric poems, the title of which in the Versions is taken from the general nature of the contents; thus the LXX. called these poems *Θρῆνοι*, *Threni*, *i.e.* Dirges, and the Syr. and Vulg. *Lamentations*. In the Hebrew Bible the Lamentations are arranged among the *Cetubim*, or (Holy) Writings, because of the nature of their contents: the Lamentations as being lyrical poetry are classed not with Prophecies, but with the Psalms and Proverbs. This classification is probably later than the translation of the LXX., who have appended the Lamentations to Jeremiah's prophecy, inserting between them the apocryphal book of Baruch, and in fact counting the three as only one book.

Although no name is attached to these poems in the Hebrew, yet both ancient tradition (LXX., Josephus, the Targum of Jonathan, the Talmud &c.) and internal evidence point to Jeremiah as the author. The time of the composition of these poems is certainly the period immediately after the capture of Jerusalem, and probably during the month which intervened between the capture of Jerusalem and its destruction.¹

Their subject is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. In the *first* of these poems the prophet dwells upon the miseries of hunger, of death in battle, of the profanation and plundering of the sanctuary, and of impending exile, oppressed by which the city sits solitary. In the *second*, these same sufferings are described with more intense force, and in closer connexion with the national sins which had caused them, and which had been aggravated by the faithlessness of the prophets. In the *third*, Jeremiah acknowledges that chastisement is for the believer's good, and he dwells more upon the spiritual aspect of sorrow, and the certainty that finally there must be the redeeming of life for God's people, and vengeance for His enemies. In the *fourth*, Judah's sorrows are confessed to have been caused by her sins. Finally, in the *fifth*, Jeremiah prays that Zion's reproach may be taken away, and that Jehovah will grant repentance unto His people, and renew their days as of old.

The structure of the first four poems is highly artificial. They are arranged in twenty-two portions, according to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; but in the first three poems each portion is again subdivided into three double-clauses, the third differing from the first and second in that each also of these divisions

¹ See the passages which shew that famine and hunger were still raging in the city, i. 11, 19; ii. 19, 20; iv. 4 &c.

begins with the same letter. In ch. iv., we have again twenty-two verses beginning with the letters of the alphabet in order, but each verse is divided into only two portions. In ch. v., though there are again twenty-two verses, the alphabetical initials are discontinued. Hence some have thought that this prayer was added by the prophet to his Lamentations when in Egypt at a somewhat later time.

The book of Lamentations has always been much used in liturgical services as giving the spiritual aspect of sorrow. It is recited in the Jewish synagogues on the ninth of Ab, the day on which the Temple was destroyed. In the Church of

England the whole of ch. iii., and portions of chs. i., ii., and iv. are read on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in Holy Week. For this choice two chief reasons may be given; the first, that in the wasted city and homeless wanderings of the chosen people we see an image of the desolation and ruin of the soul cast away—because of sin—from God's Presence into the outer darkness; the second and chief, because the mournful words of the prophet set Him before us Who has borne the chastisement due to human sin, and of Whom we think instinctively as we pronounce the words of i. 12.

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.

CHAP. 1. (8) HOW doth the city sit solitary, *that was full of people!*

^aHow is she become as a widow! she *that was* great among the nations,

^aAnd ^bprincess among the provinces, *how* is she become tributary!

2 (2) She ^cweepeth sore in the ^dnight, and her tears *are* on her cheeks:

^cAmong all her lovers ^dshe hath none to comfort *her*:

All her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.

3 (2) ^eJudah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and ^fbecause of great servitude:

^aShe dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest:

All her persecutors overtook her between the straits.

^cJer. 13. 17.
^dJob 7. 3.
^ePs. 6. 6.
^fJer. 4. 20.
& 30. 14.
^gver. 9. 16,
17, 21.

^hJer. 52. 27.

ⁱDeut. 28. 64
65.
ch. 2. 9.

4 (7) The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts:

All her gates are desolate: her priests sigh,

Her virgins are afflicted, and she *is* in bitterness.

5 (7) Her adversaries ⁱare the chief, her enemies prosper;

For the Lord hath afflicted her ^kfor the multitude of her transgressions:

Her ^lchildren are gone into captivity before the enemy.

ⁱDeut. 28.
43. 44.
^kJer. 30. 14.
Dan. 9. 7.

^lJer. 52. 28.

6 (1) And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed:

Her princes are become like harts that find no pasture,

And they are gone without strength before the pursuer.

¹ Heb. *for the greatness of servitude.*

I. This poem divides itself into two equal parts; *vv. 1-11* describe the misery which has befallen the Jews; in *vv. 12-22*, Jerusalem laments over her sufferings.

1, 2. In these two verses is the same sad image as appears in the well-known medal of Titus, struck to celebrate his triumph over Jerusalem. A woman sits weeping beneath a palm-tree, and below is the legend *Judea capta.*

Translate *v. 1*:-

How sitteth solitary the city that was full of people:

She is become as a widow that was great among the nations:

A princess among provinces she is become a vassal.

tributary] In the sense of personal labour (*Josh. xvi. 10*).

2. lovers...friends] i.e. the states in alliance with Judaea, and all human helpers.

3. because of...] i.e. the people, not of Jerusalem only, but of the whole land, is

gone into exile to escape from the affliction and laborious servitude, to which they are subject in their own land.

persecutors...between the straits] Rather, "pursuers...in the midst of her straits." The Jews flee like deer to escape from the invading Chaldeans, but are driven by them into places whence there is no escape.

4. Zion, as the holy city, is the symbol of the religious life of the people, just as Judah in the previous verse represents their national life. The "virgins" took a prominent part in all religious festivals (*Jer. xxxi. 13; Ex. xv. 20*).

5. are the chief...prosper] Or, *are become the head...are at rest.* Judea is so entirely crushed that her enemies need take no precautions against resistance on her part.

children] i.e. *young children*, who are driven before the enemy (lit. the adversary), not as a flock of lambs which follow the shepherd, but for sale as slaves.

6. *her princes &c.]* Jeremiah had before his mind the sad flight of Zedekiah and his

7 (?) Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her 'pleasant things that she had in the days of old,

When her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her:

The adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths.

^{**} 1 Kin. 8. 10.

8 (Γ) "Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she ² is removed:

All that honoured her despise her, because "they have seen her nakedness:

Yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward.

^{**} Deut. 32. 20.
Isai. 47. 7.

9 (Ω) Her filthiness is in her skirts; she ³ remembereth not her last end;

Therefore she came down wonderfully: ⁴she had no comforter.

O LORD, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified himself.

^{**} ver. 7.

10 (Ω) The adversary hath spread out his hand upon ⁴all her ⁵pleasant things:

For she hath seen that ⁶the heathen entered into her sanctuary, Whom thou didst command that ⁷they should not enter into thy congregation.

^{**} Jer. 51. 51.
Dout. 23. 3.
Neh. 13. 1.

11 (Ω) All her people sigh, 'they seek bread; They have given their pleasant things for meat ⁸to relieve the soul:

See, O LORD, and consider; for I am become vilo.

^{**} Dan. 9. 12.

12 (Λ) ⁵Is it nothing to you, all ye that ⁶pass by?

Behold, and see ⁷if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me,

¹ Or, desirable, ver. 10.

² Heb. is become a removing, or, wandering.

³ Or, desirable.

⁴ Or, to make the soul to come again.

⁵ Or, It is nothing.

⁶ Heb. pass by the way?

men of war, and their capture within a few miles of Jerusalem (Jer. xxxix. 4, 5).

7. *Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction, and of her homelessness, All her pleasant things which have been from the days of old:*

Now that her people fall by the hand of the adversary,

And she hath no helper;

Her adversaries have seen her, They have mocked at her sabbath-keepings.

The word rendered *homelessness* means *wanderings*, and describes the state of the Jews, cast forth from their homes and about to be dragged into exile.

sabbaths, or, sabbath-keepings, and the cessation from labour every seventh day struck foreigners as something strange, and provoked their ridicule.

8. *grievously sinned*] Lit. *Jerusalem hath sinned a sin*, giving the idea of a persistent continuance in wickedness.

removed] Or, become an abomination. Sin has made Jerusalem an object of horror, and therefore she is cast away.

yea, she sigheth &c.] Jerusalem groans over

the infamy of her deeds thus brought to open shame, and turns her back upon the spectators in order to hide herself.

9. *Her filthiness is in her skirts*] Her personal defilement is no longer concealed beneath the raiment (Jer. xiii. 22).

she came down wonderfully] Jerusalem once enthroned as a princess must sit on the ground as a slave.

10. *her pleasant things*] Chiefly the sacred vessels of the Temple (2 Chr. xxxvi. 10). *sanctuary...congregation*] Even a Jew might not enter the innermost sanctuary, which was for the priests only; but now the tramp of heathen soldiery has been heard within its sacred precincts.

11. *sigh...seek*] Are sighing...are seeking. The words are present participles, describing the condition of the people. After a siege lasting a year and a half the whole country, far and near, would be exhausted.

to relieve the soul] See marg., i.e. to bring back life to them. They bring out their jewels and precious articles to obtain with them at least a meal.

12-16. The lamentation of the city, personified as a woman in grief over her fate.

Wherewith the LORD hath afflicted *me* in the day of his fierce anger.

13 (2) From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaleth against them:

He hath ^xspread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back:

He hath made me desolate and faint all the day.

^x Ezek. 12.
13. & 17. 20.

14 (3) ^yThe yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they ^zDeut. 28.48. are wreathed,

And come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall, The Lord hath delivered me into *their* hands, *from whom* I am not able to rise up.

15 (4) The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty *men* in the midst of me:

He hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men:

^zThe Lord hath trodden ¹the virgin, the daughter of Judah, *as* ^zIsai. 63. 3. in a winepress.

16 (5) For these *things* I weep; ^amine eye, mine eye runneth down [“]Jer. 13. 17. with water,

Because ^bthe comforter that should ²relieve my soul is far from ^bver. 2, 9. me:

My children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.

17 (6) ^cZion spreadeth forth her hands, *and* ^dthere is none to comfort her:

The Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob, *that* his adversaries *should be* round about him:

Jerusalem is as a menstrual woman among them.

¹ Or, the winepress of the virgin, &c.

² Heb. bring back.

^c Jer. 4. 31.
^d ver. 2, 9.

13. *it prevailed*] Or, hath subdued.
he hath turned me back] Judea, like a hunted animal, endeavours to escape, but finds every outlet blocked by nets, and recoils from them with terror and a sense of utter hopelessness.

14. *bound by his hand*] As the ploughman binds the yoke upon the neck of oxen, so God compels Judah to bear the punishment of her sins.

they are wreathed, and...] Or, *they are knotted together, they come up* &c. Judah's sins are like the cords by which the pieces of the yoke are fastened together (Jer. xxvii. 2); they are knotted and twined like a bunch upon the neck, and bind the yoke around it so securely that it is impossible for her to shake it off.

he hath made...] Or, *it hath made my strength to stumble*. The yoke of punishment thus imposed and securely fastened, bows down her strength by its weight, and makes her totter beneath it.

the Lord] The third distich of the verse begins here, and with it a new turn of the lamentation. The title Adonai (properly, my Lord) is in the Lamentations used by itself in fourteen places, while the name Jehovah is less prominent; as if in their punishment the people felt the lordship of the Deity more, and His Covenant-love to them less.

15. *The Lord hath trodden under foot* Or, Adonai hath made contemptible (i.e. put into the balance, made to go up as the lighter weight, and so made desppicable) *my war-horses* (put metaphorically for heroes).

in the midst of me] They had not fallen gloriously in the battle-field, but remained ignominiously in the city.

assembly] Or, “a solemn feast;” the word especially used of the great festivals (Lev. xxiii. 2.) Adonai has proclaimed a festival, not for me, but against me.

the Lord hath trodden &c....] Or, Adonai hath trodden the winepress for the virgin daughter of Judah. See Jer. li. 14 note. God by slaying Judah's young men in battle is trampling for her the winepress of His indignation.

17. *spreadeth forth her hands*] In prayer (Ex. ix. 29, 33), but Zion entreats in vain. There is no one to comfort her—not God, for He is chastising her, nor man, for all the neighbouring nations have become her enemies. See v. 2.

that his adversaries &c. Rather, that those round about him should be his adversaries; all the neighbouring states should regard him with aversion.

Jerusalem is &c.] i.e. is become an abomination. The words are virtually the same as in v. 8.

* Neb. 9. 33. 18 (Σ) The LORD is ^{righteous}; for I have ^{rebelled} against his commandment:
Dan. 9. 7.
/ 1 Sam. 12.
14, 15. Hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow:
My virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.

2 ver. 2. 19 (¶) I called for my lovers, but ^othey deceived me:
Jer. 30. 14. My priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city,
^ ver. 11. [^]While they sought their meat to relieve their souls.

* Job 30. 27. 20 (¶) Behold, O LORD; for I am in distress: my ⁱbowels are troubled;
Isai. 16. 11.
Jer. 4. 19. Mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled:
^kAbroad the sword bereaveth, at home *there is* as death.

^l Deut. 32. 25.
Ezek. 7. 15.
^l ver. 2. 21 (¶) They have heard that I sigh: ⁱ*there is* none to comfort me:
All mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done *it*:
Thou wilt bring ^mthe day *that* thou hast ²called, and they shall be like unto me.

* Ps. 109. 15. 22 (¶) ⁿLet all their wickedness come before thee;
And do unto them, as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions:
o ch. 5. 17. For my sighs *are* many, and ^omy heart *is* faint.

CHAP. 2. (¶) HOW hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger,

^a Matt. 11. 23. ^a And cast down from heaven unto the earth ^bthe beauty of Israel,
^b 2 Sam. 1. 19. ^c And remembered not ^chis footstool in the day of his anger!

^d ver. 17. 2 (¶) The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob,
ch. 3. 43. ^dand hath not pitied:
He hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah;
^e Ps. 89. 39. He hath ^fbrought *them* down to the ground: ^ghe hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof.

^f Ps. 74. 11. 3 (¶) He hath cut off in *his* fierce anger all the horn of Israel:
^g Ps. 89. 46. ^fHe hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy,
^g And he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, *which* devoureth round about.

¹ Heb. *mouth*.

² Or, *proclaimed*.

³ Heb. *made to touch*.

18. *people*] peoples, heathen nations.

19. *I called for...]* Rather, *to my lovers, while they sought their meat*] Lit. *for they sought food for themselves to revive their souls*. Complete the sense by adding, *and found none*.

20. *troubled*] Or, inflamed with sorrow. *turned within me*] Agitated violently.

at home there is as death] i.e. in the house there are pale pining forms, wasting with hunger, and presenting the appearance of death.

21. *They have heard &c.*] Or, *They heard that I sigh, that I have no comforter.* *thou wilt bring the day...*] Lit. *thou hast brought the day thou hast proclaimed, and they shall be like unto me.* The day of Judah's punishment was the proof that the

nations now triumphing over Jerusalem's fall would certainly be visited.

II. This poem also divides itself like ch. i. into two nearly equal portions; in vv. 1-10, the prophet describes the punishment which has fallen upon Zion; vv. 11-22 are a lamentation and a prayer.

1. *How &c.*] Or, *How doth Adonai corr.* He hath cast down &c. By God's footstool seems to be meant the Ark. See Ps. xcix. 5 note.

2. *habitations*] The dwellings of the shepherds in the pastures (Jer. xlvi. 19). These are described as swallowed up by an earthquake, while the storm itself *throws down the fortified cities of Judah*.

polluted] i.e. profaned it, made common or unclean what before was holy.

4 (¶) [¶]He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary,
And slew ¹all that were pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion:
He poured out his fury like fire.

5 (¶) [¶]The Lord was as an enemy: he hath swallowed up Israel.
He hath swallowed up all her palaces: he hath destroyed his strong holds,
And hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

6 (¶) And he hath violently ²taken away his ²tabernacle, ³as if it were of a garden: he hath destroyed his places of the assembly:
The Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion,
And hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest.

7 (¶) The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary,
He hath ³given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces;
They have made a noise in the house of the Lord, as in the ⁴day of a solemn feast.

8 (¶) The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion:
He hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand ⁵from destroying:
Therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together.

9 (¶) Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and ⁶broken her bars:

¹ Heb. *all the desirable of the eye.*

² Or, *hedge.*
³ Heb. *shut up.*

⁴ Heb. *swallowing up.*

⁵ 2Kin. 21.13.
Isai. 34.11.

⁶ Jer. 51.30.

3. As the horn is the symbol of power, the cutting off of every horn means the depriving Israel of all power of resistance. The drawing back of God's right hand signifies the withdrawal of that special Providence which used to protect the chosen people.

and he burned &c.] Or, *and he kindled a fire in Jacob:* as the active enemy of Jacob, Himself applying the torch.

he stood with his right hand &c.] i.e. that right hand so often stretched out to help now grasped a weapon ready for Judah's destruction.

were pleasant] Or, *was pleasant.* Put full stop after "eye." Begin the third distich thus:

In the tabernacle (or, tent) of the daughter of Zion.

5. Lit. *Adonai has become as an enemy.*

6. *tabernacle]* Or, *covert* (Jer. xxv. 38), i.e. such a tent of boughs as was put up at the Feast of Tabernacles. The words mean, "the Lord hath (as) violently destroyed His booth, as a man might tear down a shed in a garden." Cp. Isai. i. 8.

his places of the assembly] Or, *His great festivals* (i. 15 note). It is the word rendered *solemn feasts* in the next clause, and rightly joined there with *sabbaths*, the weekly, as the other were the annual festivals. It is no longer Adonai, but the Lord (Jehovah) who lets them pass into oblivion. He had once instituted them for His own honour, now He lets them lie forgotten.

hath despised &c.] Or, *hath rejected king and priest.* With the destruction of the city the royal authority fell: with the ruined Temple and the cessation of the festivals the functions of the priest ceased.

7. *sanctuary]* The Holy of Holies; *the walls of her palaces* are those of the sacred buildings.

8. *a line]* Cp. Isai. xxxiv. 11. The destruction is systematic and thorough.

9. *Her gates are sunk into the ground]* So completely destroyed, that one might suppose they had been swallowed up in an abyss.

¹ Isai. 63. 10.
ver. 5.

² Ezek. 21.23.

³ ver. 4.

Jer. 30. 14.

⁴ 2 Kin. 25. 9.

Jer. 52. 13.

⁵ Ps. 80. 12.

Isai. 5. 5.

⁶ Isai. 1. 9.

⁷ ch. 1. 4.

Zeph. 3. 18.

* Deut. 28. 36.
 2 Kin. 24. 15.
 2 Chr. 15. 3.
 " Ps. 74. 9.
 Ezek. 7. 26.
 " Job. 2. 13.
 Isa. 3. 20.
 ch. 3. 28.
 v Job. 2. 12.
 " Isa. 15. 3.
 Ezek. 7. 18.

^a Ps. 6. 7.
 ch. 3. 48.
^b ch. 1. 20.
^c Job 16. 13.
 Ps. 22. 14.
^d ver. 19.
 ch. 4. 4.

10 (v) The elders of the daughter of Zion ^asit upon the ground, ^band keep silence :
 They have ^ccast up dust upon their heads ; they have ^dgirded themselves with sackcloth ;
 The virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.

11 (D) "Mine eyes do fail with tears, ^bmy bowels are troubled,
 "My liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people ;
 Because ^dthe children and the sucklings ^aswoon in the streets of the city.

12 (v) They say to their mothers, Where ^bis corn and wine ?
 When they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city,
 When their soul was poured out into their mother's bosom.

13 (v) What thing shall I take to witness for thee ? ^cwhat thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem ?
 What shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion ?
 For thy breach ^bis great like the sea : who can heal thee ?

14 (v) Thy ^bprophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee :
 And they have not ^adiscovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity ;
 But have seen for thee false burdens, and causes of banishment.

15 (D) ^bAll that pass ^aby ^cclap their hands at thee ;
 They hiss ^band wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem,
 saying,

¹ Or, *saint*.

² Heb. *by the way*.

her king] The prophet's lamentation, occupied before chiefly with the buildings of the city and Temple, now turns to the people, beginning with their temporal rulers. *the law is no more]* The Jewish Law, the Torah, came to an end when it had no longer a local habitation. Its enactments were essentially those not of a Catholic, but of a national religion, and the restoration of the nation with a material Temple was indispensable to its continued existence. It was only when elevated to be a Catholic religion, by being made spiritual, that it could do without Ark, Temple, and a separate people.

her prophets also find...] With the Torah the special gift of prophecy also ceased, since both were peculiar to the Theocracy ; but it was not till the establishment of Christianity that they were finally merged in higher developments of grace.

11. *troubled]* See marg. ref. note.

liver] As the heart was regarded by the Jews as the seat of the intellect, so the liver (or *bowels*) was supposed to be the seat of the emotions. By the pouring out of the liver upon the ground was meant that feelings had entirely given way under the acuteness of

sorrow, and he could no longer restrain them.

12. *They say]* Or, "They keep saying" : it was an oft-repeated cry, even whilst expiring upon their mother's bosom.

13. *equal*] i.e. *compare*. Zion's breach, i.e. her destruction, is measureless, like the ocean.

14. *Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee]* The LXX. and Vulg. give the true meaning, *stupidity* (see Jer. xxiii. 13 note).

to turn away thy captivity] The right sense is, *They have not disclosed to thee thy sins, that so thou mightest repent, and I might have turned away thy captivity.*

burdens] Applied contemptuously to predictions which proved *false* or *empty*, i.e. failed of accomplishment. On the deduction to be drawn from this, see Jer. xxviii. 9.

causes of banishment] The result of the teaching of the false prophets would be that God would *drive out* the Jews from their land.

Some render the words *false...banishment* by "oracles of falsehood and seduction."

15. Cp. the scene round the cross of the Redeemer (Matt. xxvii. 39).

Is this the city that men call 'The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth ?

16 (3) ^mAll thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee : They hiss and gnash the teeth : they say, ⁿWe have swallowed her up : Certainly this *is* the day that we looked for ; we have found, ^owe have seen it.

17 (2) The LORD hath done *that* which he had ^pdevised ; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old : ^qHe hath thrown down, and hath not pitied : And he hath caused *thine* enemy to ^rrejoice over thee, he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries.

18 (3) Their heart cried unto the Lord, O ^swall of the daughter of Zion, ^tLet tears run down like a river day and night : Give thyself no rest ; let not the apple of thine eye cease.

19 (7) Arise, ^ucry out in the night : in the beginning of the watches ^vpour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord : Lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, ^wThat faint for hunger ^xin the top of every street.

20 (7) Behold, O LORD, and consider to whom thou hast done this. ^yShall the women eat their fruit, *and* children ^zof a span long ? ^aShall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord ?

21 (2) ^bThe young and the old lie on the ground in the streets : My virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword ; Thou hast slain *them* in the day of thine anger ; ^cthou hast killed, *and* not pitied.

22 (7) Thou hast called as in a solemn day ^dmy terrors round about, So that in the day of the Lord's anger none escaped nor remained :

¹ Or, *swaddled with their hands* ?

16. *seen it*] Omit *it*. The intensity of the enemy's exultation is shewn by the heaping up of unconnected words. We have found what we sought, have seen what we looked for.

17. *that which he had devised*] Or, *what he purposed*. Zion's ruin was the fulfilment of God's determination, of which they had been forewarned from the days of old (see marg. ref.).

fulfilled] Or, *finished*.

18. *their heart*] That of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The prophet bids the wall, as the representative of the people who had dwelt secure under its protection, shed floods of tears on their behalf. Broken up by the enemy, it could be their guardian no longer, but by its ruins it might still cry unto the Lord in their behalf.

a river] Or, *a brook or torrent*.

rest] Properly the torpor and numbness which follows upon excessive grief.

apple of thine eye] See Ps. xvii. 8 note.

18. *in (or at) the beginning of the watches*] *At the beginning of each night-watch* means all the night through. The Hebrews divided the night into three watches.

20. The sense is : *See, Jehovah, and look ! Whom hast Thou treated thus ? Shall women eat their fruit—children whom they must still carry ?* the swaddled child being one still needing to be nursed and borne in their arms.

21. Omit *them* and *and*, which weaken the intensity of the passage.

22. *Thou hast called as in a solemn day*] *i.e. Thou callest like a fast day*, i.e. like the proclaiming of a festival.

my terrors round about] The prophet's watch-word (Jer. vi. 25 note). God now proclaims what Jeremiah had so often called out before, *Mayor-missabib*. On every side were conquering Chaldeans.

^m Job 16. 9.
ⁿ Ps. 22. 13.
^o Ps. 56. 2.

^p Ps. 35. 21.
^q Lev. 2.
^r Deut. 23.
^s ver. 2.
^t Ps. 39. 13.
& 89. 42.

^u ver. 8.

^v Jer. 14. 17.
ch. 1. 16.

^w Ps. 119. 147.
^x Ps. 62. 8.

^y ver. 11.
^z Isai. 51. 20.
Nah. 3. 10.
^a Lev. 26. 29.
Jer. 19. 9.
Ezek. 5. 10.
^b ch. 4. 13.

^c 2 Chr. 36. 17.
^d ch. 3. 43.

¹ Hos. 9. 12. / Those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed.

CHAP. 3. (¶) *I AM the man that hath seen affliction*

By the rod of his wrath.

2 *He hath led me, and brought me into darkness,*

But not into light.

3 *Surely against me is he turned;*

He turneth his hand against me all the day.

4 (¶) "My flesh and my skin hath he made old;

He hath broken my bones.

5 *He hath builded against me,*

And compassed me with gall and travel.

6 "He hath set me in dark places,—as they that be dead of old.

7 (¶) "He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out:

He hath made my chain heavy.

8 Also "when I cry and shout,—he shutteth out my prayer.

9 *He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone,*

He hath made my paths crooked.

¹ Job 10. 16. / *He was unto me as a bear lying in wait,*

And as a lion in secret places.

11 *He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces:*

He hath made me desolate.

12 *He hath bent his bow,—and set me as a mark for the arrow.*

¹ Ps. 38. 2.

² Job 6. 4.

13 (¶) *He hath caused the arrows of his quiver*

To enter into my reins.

¹ Heb. *sons.*

III. This clegy is both the most elaborate in form and the most sublime in its ideas of the five poems which compose the Book of Lamentations. It presents the image of the deepest suffering, passing on to the confession of sin, the acknowledgment of God's justice, and the prayer of faith for forgiveness. It is the ideal representation of that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of (2 Cor. vii. 10).

1. *that hath seen affliction*] *i.e.* hath experienced, suffered it.

3. *is he turned; he turneth*] *Or, surely against me hath he turned his hand again and again all the day long.*

4. *made old*] *Or, wasted:* his strength slowly wasted as he pined away in sorrow.

he hath broken my bones] This clause completes the representation of the sufferer's physical agonies. Here the idea is that of acute pain.

5. *He hath builded...*] The metaphor is taken from the operations in a siege.

gall and travel] *Or, "travail; v. i.e. bitterness and weariness (through toil).*

6. *Or, He hath made me to dwell in darkness, i.e. in Sheol or Hades, as those for ever dead.*

7. The prophet feels as if enclosed within walls, and fettered.

8. *shout*] *i.e. call for help.*

shutteth out] *Or, shutteth in.* God has so closed up the avenues to the place in which he is immured, that his voice can find no egress.

9. *inclosed*] *Or, hedged (v. 7).*

hath made crooked] *Or, hath turned aside.* A solid wall being built across the main road, Jeremiah turns aside into by-ways, but finds them *turned aside*, so that they lead him back after long wandering to the place whence he started.

10-18. Having dwelt upon the difficulties which hemmed in his path, he now shews that there are dangers attending upon escape.

11. The meaning is, "God, as a lion, lying in wait, has made me turn aside from my path, but my flight was in vain, for springing upon me from His ambush He has torn me in pieces."

desolate] *Or, astonished, stupefied that he cannot flee.* The word is a favourite one with Jeremiah.

12. This new simile arises out of the former one, the idea of a hunter being suggested by that of the bear and lion. When the hunter comes, it is not to save him.

14 I was a ^kderision to all my people;
 And ^ltheir song all the day.

15 ^mHe hath filled me with ^lbitterness,
 He hath made me drunken with wormwood.

16 ^(l) He hath also broken my teeth ⁿwith gravel stones,
 He hath ^ocovered me with ashes.

17 And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace:
 I forgot ^pprosperity.

18 ^oAnd I said, My strength and my hope
 Is perished from the L^{ORD}:

19 ^(r) ^qRemembering mine affliction and my misery,
^rThe wormwood and the gall.

20 My soul hath ^sthem still in remembrance,
 And is ^thumbled in me.

21 This I ^urecall to my mind,—therefore have I hope.

22 ^(r) ^qIt is of the L^{ORD}'s mercies that we are not consumed,
 Because his compassions fail not.

23 *They are now* ^vevery morning:—great is thy faithfulness.

24 The L^{ORD} is my ^wportion, with my soul;
 Therefore will I hope in him.

25 ^(s) The L^{ORD} is good unto them that ^xwait for him,
 To the soul that seeketh him.

26 *It is* good that a man should both hope
^yAnd quietly wait for the salvation of the L^{ORD}.

27 ^zIt is good for a man—that he bear the yoke in his youth.

28 ^(t) ^uHe sitteth alone and keepeth silence,
 Because he hath borne ^vit upon him.

^k Jer. 20. 7.
^l Job 30. 9.
^m Ps. 69. 12.
ⁿ Jer. 9. 15.

^o Prov. 20. 17.
^p Ps. 31. 22.

^q Jer. 9. 15.

^r Mal. 3. 6.

^s Isai. 33. 2.
^t Ps. 10. 5.
^u Jer. 10. 10.

^v Ps. 130. 6.
^w Isai. 30. 18.
^x Mic. 7. 7.

^y Ps. 37. 7.
^z Ps. 94. 12.
 & 119. 71.
^v Jer. 15. 17.
 ch. 2. 10.

¹ Heb. *bitternesses*.
² Or, *rolled me in the ashes*.

³ Heb. *good*.
⁴ Or, *remember*.
⁵ Heb. *loved*.

⁶ Heb. *make to return to*
my heart.

14. Metaphor is dropped, and Jeremiah shews the real nature of the arrows which rankled in him so deeply.

15. *He hath filled me to the full with bitterness*, i.e. bitter sorrows (Job ix. 18).

16. *broken my teeth with gravel stones*] His bread was so filled with grit that in eating it his teeth were broken.

17. *prosperity*] Lit. as in marg. i.e. I forgot what good was, I lost the very idea of what it meant.

18. The prophet reaches the verge of despair. But by struggling against it he reaches at length firm ground.

19. *Remembering*] Or, as in marg. It is a prayer to Jehovah.

my misery] Or, *my homelessness* (i. 7 note).

21. *This I recall*] Rather, *This will I bring back to my heart, therefore will I hope*. Knowing that God hears the prayer of the contrite, he begins again to hope.

22-42. The centre of the present poem, as it also holds the central place in the whole series of the Lamentations. In them the riches of God's grace and mercy are set forth in the brightest colours, but no sooner are they ended than the prophet resumes the language of woe.

22. *that we*] He is speaking as the representative of all sufferers.

24. *The L^{ORD} is my portion*] *My portion is Jehovah*, see Num. xviii. 20; Ps. xvi. 5, &c.

therefore will I hope in him] A more full expression of the confidence present in the prophet's mind in v. 21, but based now upon God's faithfulness in shewing mercy.

25-27. In these three verses, each beginning in the Hebrew with the word *good*, we have first the fundamental idea that Jehovah Himself is good, and if good to all, then especially is He so to those who being in adversity can yet *wait* in confidence upon His mercy.

26. *and quietly wait*] Lit. *and be in silence*, i.e. abstain from all complaining.

27. *the yoke*] Or, a *yoke*. By bearing a yoke in his youth, i.e. being called upon to suffer in early age, a man learns betimes the lesson of silent endurance, and so finds it more easy to be calm and patient in later years.

28-30. Translate:—

Let him sit alone and keep silence;
For He [God] hath laid the yoke upon him.

^a Job 42. 6. 29 ^b He putteth his mouth in the dust ;
If so be there may be hope.

^a Isa. 50. 6. 30 ^a He giveth *his* cheek to him that smiteth him :
Matt. 5. 39. He is filled full with reproach.

^b Ps. 94. 14. 31 (ג) ^b For the Lord will not cast off for ever :
32 But though he cause grief,
Yet will he have compassion according to the multitudine of his
mercies.

^c Eze. 33. 11. 33 For ^c he doth not afflict ¹ willingly
Heb. 12. 10. Nor grieve the children of men.

34 (ג) To crush under his feet—all the prisoners of the earth,
35 To turn aside the right of a man
Before the face of ² the most High,

^d Hab. 1. 13. 36 To subvert a man in his cause,—^d the Lord ³ approveth not.

^e Ps. 33. 9. 37 (ג) Who *is* he ^e *that* saith, and it cometh to pass,
When the Lord commandeth *it* not ?

38 Out of the mouth of the most High
Proceedeth not ^f evil and good ?

^f Job 2. 10. 39 ^g Wherefore doth a living man ⁴ complain,
Amos 3. 6. ^h A man for the punishment of his sins ?

^g Prov. 10. 3. 40 (ג) Let us search and try our ways,
Mic. 7. 9. And turn again to the Lord.

ⁱ Ps. 86. 4. 41 ⁱ Let us lift up our heart with *our* hands
Unto God in the heavens.

^k Dan. 9. 5. 42 ^k We have transgressed and have rebelled :
Thou hast not pardoned.

¹ Heb. *from his heart.*² Or, *a superior.*³ Or, *seeth not.*⁴ Or, *murmur.*

Let him place his mouth in the dust ;

Perchance there is hope.

Let him offer his cheek to him that smiteth

him ;

Let him be filled to the full with reproach.

It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth, but only if he bear it rightly. To attain this result, let him learn resignation, remembering Who has laid the yoke upon him. This reverential silence is described (v. 29), as putting the mouth in the dust, and so lying prostrate before the Deity ; while (v. 30) the harder task is imposed of bearing contumely with meekness (marg. ref.), and not shrinking from the last dregs of the cup of reproach. Many who submit readily to God are indignant when the suffering comes through men.

31-33. Reasons for the resignation urged in the previous triplet.

34-36. Neither does God approve of wanton cruelty inflicted by one man on another. Three examples are given : the treatment of prisoners of war ; the procuring an unjust sentence before a legal tribunal acting in the name of God (see Exod. xxi. 6) ; and the perversion of justice generally.

37-39. Why then does a loving God, Who

disapproves of suffering when inflicted by man upon man, Himself send sorrow and misery ? *Because of sins.*

37. Lit. *Who is this that spake and it was done, though Adonai commanded it not ?*

39. So long as God spares a man's life, why does he murmur ? The chastisement is really for his good ; only let him use it aright, and he will be thankful for it in the end.

a man for the punishment of his sins [Translate : *Let each man sigh for, i.e. because of, his sins.* Instead of murmuring because God sends him sorrow, let him rather mourn over the sins which have made punishment necessary. The sense of the A. V. is, Why does a man...murmur for *his sins* ? *i.e.* for the necessary results of them in chastisement.]

40-42. The prophet urges men to search out their faults and amend them.

40. *and turn again to the Lord*] Or, *and return to Jehovah.* The prep. (to) in the Hebr. implies not half way, but the whole.

41. Lit. *Let us lift up our heart unto our hands unto God in heaven* ; as if the heart first lifted up the hands, and then with them mounted up in prayer to God. In real prayer the outward expression is caused by the emotion stirring within.

43 (D) Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us :
 Thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied. ¶ ch. 2.3,17,21.

44 Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud,
 "That our prayer should not pass through. " ver. 8.

45 Thou hast made us as the "offscouring
 And refuse in the midst of the people. " 1 Cor. 4.13.

46 (y) "All our enemies have opened—their mouths against us. o ch. 2. 16.

47 ^pFear and a snare is come upon us,
 "Desolation and destruction. p Jer. 48. 43.

48 ^rMine eye runneth down with rivers of water
 For the destruction of the daughter of my people. q Isai. 51. 19.

49 (E) ^sMine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not,
 Without any intermission, r Jer. 4. 19.

50 Till the LORD ^tlook down,—and behold from heaven. ch. 2. 11.

51 Mine eye affecteth ^umine heart
 "Because of all the daughters of my city. s Ps. 77. 2.

52 (E) Mine enemies chased me sore,
 Like a bird, "without cause. t Dan. 6. 17.

53 They have cut off my life ^vin the dungeon,
 And ^wcast a stone upon me. u Ps. 35. 7.

54 ^xWaters flowed over mine head ;—then ^aI said, I am cut off. v Jer. 38. 6.

55 (P) ^yI called upon thy name, O LORD,—out of the low dungeon. w Dan. 6. 17.

56 ^zThou hast heard my voice :
 Hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. x Ps. 69. 2.

57 Thou ^ddrewest near in the day that I called upon thee :
 Thou saidst, Fear not. y Isai. 33. 10.

58 (r) O Lord, thou hast ^epleaded the causes of my soul ;
 "Thou hast redeemed my life. z Ps. 130. 1.

59 O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong :—^gjudge thou my cause. a Ps. 3. 4.

60 Thou hast seen all their vengeance
 And all their ^himaginings against me. b Jonah 2. 2.

61 (W) Thou hast heard their reproach, O LORD,
 And all their imaginations against me ; c Ps. 4. 8.

^k Jer. 11. 19.

¹ Heb. my soul.² Or, more than all.

43-66. Far from pardoning, God is still actively punishing His people.

43. Rather, *Thou hast covered Thyself with wrath and pursued (i. 3 note) us.* The covering (here and in v. 44) is that of clothing and enwrapping.

45. Omit *as*.

47. *desolation*] Or, *devastation*.

48-51. The deep sympathy of the prophet, which pours itself forth in abundant tears over the distress of his people.

51. Or, *Mine eye causeth pain to my soul, i.e. maketh my soul ache, because of the sad fate of the maidens (i. 4, 18, &c.).*

52. Or, *They who without cause are mine enemies have hunted me sore like a bird.* Probably the prophet is speaking of his personal sorrows.

53. *They have cut off my life in the dungeon*] Or, *They destroyed my life in the pit, i.e. tried to destroy it by casting me into*

the cistern, and covering the mouth with a stone. See marg. ref.

54. *Waters flowed over mine head*] A figurative expression for great mental trouble.

55-66. A prayer for deliverance and for vengeance upon his enemies.

55. *out of the low dungeon*] *The lowest pit* of Ps. lxxxviii. 6. Some consider that Ps. lxix. was composed by Jeremiah, and is the prayer referred to here (Jer. xxxviii. 6 note).

56. *Thou hast heard*] In sending Ebed-melech to deliver me. The next clause signifies *Hide not thine ear to my relief to my cry, i.e. to my cry for relief.*

58. God now appears as the prophet's next of kin, pleading the lawsuits of his soul, i.e. the controversies which concern his salvation, and rescuing his life, in jeopardy through the malice of his enemies.

59. *strong*] Done to him by the perversion of justice.

60, 61. *imaginings*] Or, *devices*.

62 The lips of those that rose up against me,
And their device against me all the day.
¹ Ps. 130. 2. 63 Behold their ⁱsitting down, and their rising up;
^k ver. 14. ^kI am their musick.
¹ Ps. 28. 4. 64 (¶) ⁱRender unto them a recompence, O LORD,
² Tim. 4. 14. According to the work of their hands.
⁶⁵ Give them ⁱsorrow of heart,—thy curse unto them.
⁶⁶ Persecute and destroy them in anger
"From under the ⁱⁱheavens of the LORD.

ⁱⁱDeut. 25. 10.
Jer. 10. 11.
ⁱⁱ I's. 8. 3.

^a ch. 2. 19.

^b Isai. 30. 14.

^c Job 39. 11.

^d Ps. 22. 15.

^e See ch. 2.
11. 12.

^f Job 24. 8.

CHAP. 4. (¶) HOW is the gold become dim!

*How is the most fine gold changed!
The stones of the sanctuary are poured out
"In the top of every street.*

2 (¶) The precious sons of Zion,
Comparable to fine gold,
How are they esteemed ^bas earthen pitchers,
The work of the hands of the potter!

3 (¶) Even the ²sea monsters draw out the breast,
They give suck to their young ones:
The daughter of my people *is become* cruel,
^cLike the ostriches in the wilderness.

4 (¶) ^dThe tongue of the sucking child
Cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst:
^eThe young children ask bread,
^fAnd no man breaketh *it* unto them.

5 (¶) They that did feed delicately
Are desolate in the streets:
They that were brought up in scarlet
^fEmbrace dunghills.

6 (¶) For the ³punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my
people
Is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom,

¹ Or, *obstinacy of heart.*

² Or, *sea calces.*

³ Or, *iniquity.*

63. their sitting down, and their rising up] i.e. all the ordinary actions of their life.
musick. Or, *song, the subject of it.*

64-66. The Versions render the verbs in these verses as futures, *Thou shalt render unto them a recompence, &c.*

65. Give them sorrow of heart] Or, *Thou wilt give them blindness of heart.*

66. persecute &c.] Or, *pursue them in anger and destroy them, &c.*

1. V. In this poem the distinctive idea is, that the miseries (rr. 1-11) which have befallen Judah are the punishment of her sin (rr. 12-20), and will therefore end—when chastisement has had its proper effect—in her restoration (rr. 21, 22).

1. The stones of the sanctuary] Or, *the hallowed stones*, lit. *stones of holiness*, a metaphor for the people themselves. The actual stones of the Temple would not be thus widely thrown about as to be seen everywhere, but the prophet has already affirmed this of the young children dying of hunger (cp. ii. 19).

2. The precious sons of Zion] The whole nation was consecrated to God, and formed "a kingdom of priests" (Exod. xix. 6): in this respect, a type of the Christian Church (1 Pet. ii. 5).

comparable to fine gold] Lit. *weighed with solid gold*, and so equal to their weight in it. With this is contrasted the hollow pitcher easily broken, and made of materials of no intrinsic value.

3. sea monsters] Rather, *jackals.*
their young ones] *Their whelps.* The term is applied only to the young of dogs, lions, and the like.

5. they that were brought up in scarlet] Lit. *those that were carried upon scarlet*; young children in arms and of the highest birth now lie on the dirt-heaps of the city.

6. Rather, For the iniquity of the daughter of my people was greater than the sin of Sodom. The prophet deduces this conclusion from the greatness of Judah's misery (cp. Jer. xxx. 11; see also Luke xiii. 1-5).

That was ⁹overthrown as in a moment,
And no hands stayed on her.

⁹ Gen. 19.25.

7 (1) Her Nazarites were purer than snow,
They were whiter than milk,
They were more ruddy in body than rubies,
Their polishing *was* of sapphire:

¹ Joel 2. 6.
Nah. 2. 10.

8 (11) Their visage is ¹¹blacker than a coal;
They are not known in the streets:
¹Their skin cleaveth to their bones;
It is withered, it is become like a stick.

¹ Ps. 102. 5.

9 (2) *They that be* slain with the sword are better
Than *they that be* slain with hunger:
For these ²pine away,
Stricken through for *want of* the fruits of the field.

² ch. 2. 20.
¹ Isa. 49. 15.
² Deut. 28. 57.
2 Kin. 6. 20.

10 (1) ¹The hands of the ¹pitiful women
Have sodden their own children:
They were their ²meat in the destruction
Of the daughter of my people.

¹ Jer. 7. 20.
² Deut. 32. 22.
Jer. 21. 14.

11 (2) The LORD hath accomplished his fury;
¹He hath poured out his fierce anger,
And ²hath kindled a fire in Zion,
And it hath devoured the foundations thereof.

12 (1) The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world,
Would not have believed
That the adversary and the enemy should have entered
Into the gates of Jerusalem.

¹ Jer. 5. 31.
Ezek. 22. 28.
28.
Zeph. 3. 4.
² Matt. 23.
31, 37.

13 (2) ¹For the sins of her prophets,
²And the iniquities of her priests,
³That have shed the blood of the just
In the midst of her,

14 (2) They have wandered
¹As blind men in the streets,
²They have polluted themselves with blood,
³So that men could not touch their garments.

¹ Jer. 2. 31.
² Num. 10. 16.

¹ Heb. *darker than black-*
nero.

² Heb. *flow out.*

³ Or, *in that they could not*
but touch.

no hands stayed on her] Or, *no hands were round about her.* Sodom's sufferings in dying were brief: there were no starving children, no mothers cooking their offspring for food.

7. The Nazarites from their temperance were remarkable for health and personal beauty, besides being held in religious veneration.

rubies] Or, *corals.*

their polishing was of sapphires] Or, *their shape was a sapphire.* The allusion is no longer to colour, but to form. Their shape was exact and faultless as the cutting of a precious stone.

8. *Their visage &c.]* Their form (their whole person, see 1 Sam. xxviii. 14) &c. as in marg. See Job xxx. 30.

it is withered, it is become like a stick]

Or, *It has become dry like a piece of wood.*

10. *pitiful]* i.e. tender-hearted, compassionate. *Meat* is used for *food* (Ps. lxix. 21). What is here stated actually occurred during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus.

12. Though Jerusalem had been several times captured (1 K. xiv. 26; 2 K. xiv. 13, xxiii. 33-35), yet it had been so strongly fortified by Uzziah and his successors as to have been made virtually impregnable. Its present capture by Nebuchadnezzar had cost him a year and a half's siege.

13. *the blood of the just]* Jer. xxvi. 7-24 exhibits priests and prophets as the prime movers in an attempt to silence the word of God by putting Jeremiah to death. Cp. marg. ref. to Matt.

14. *They have wandered]* God's ministers,

¹ Lev. 13. 45. 15 (D) They cried unto them, Depart ye; ¹ it is ¹unclean; Depart, depart, touch not: When they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn *there*.

16 (E) The ²anger of the Lord hath divided them; He will no more regard them: ^{* ch. 5. 12.} "They respected not the persons of the priests, They favoured not the elders.

^{* 2 Kin. 24. 7} 17 (D) As for us, ²our eyes as yet failed Isra. 20. 5. For our vain help: ^{Jer. 37. 7.} In our watching we have watched For a nation *that* could not save *us*.

^{v 2 Kin. 25.} 18 (E) ^vThey hunt our steps, ^{4, 5.} That we cannot go in our streets: Our end is near, our days are fulfilled; For ²our end is come.

² Ezek. 7. 2. 19 (F) Our persecutors are ^aswifter Amos 8. 2. Than the eagles of the heaven: ^aJer. 4. 13. They pursued us upon the mountains, They laid wait for us in the wilderness.

^{b Gen. 2. 7.} 20 (G) The ^bbreath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, ^cWas taken in their pits, ^cJer. 52. 9. Of whom we said, Under his shadow ^{Ezek. 12. 13.} We shall live among the heathen.

^{d Like Eccles. 11. 9.} 21 (H) ^dRejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom That dwellest in the land of Uz; ^eJer. 25. 15. ^eThe cup also shall pass through unto thee: Obad. 10. Thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked.

¹ Or, *ye polluted*.

² Or, *face*.

consecrated to His service, wandered through the city blinded by the insatiable lust of slaughter. It was a pollution to touch their garments.

15. Men cried to these priests, *Away! unclean! away! away! touch not.* *Unclean* was the cry of the leper whenever he appeared in public: here it is the warning shout of those who meet the murderers.

when they fled away and wandered] These priests fled away from the city, but with uncertain steps, not knowing where to find refuge. They find themselves abhorred abroad as well as at home.

It is quite possible that this verse records a real occurrence, if not during the siege, at all events during the last years of Zedekiah's reign.

16. Lit. *The countenance of Jehovah hath scattered them*, has driven these outlawed priests hither and thither, and *He will no more regard them* with favour.

17-20. A rapid sketch of the last days of the siege and the capture of the king.

17. Rather, *Still do our eyes waste away looking for our vain help.* ^{in our watching} Or, *on our watchtower.*

18. Or, *They hunted our steps that we could not go out into the streets.* To hunt means here to lie in ambush, and catch by snares; and the streets are lit, *the wide places*, especially at the gates. Towards the end of the siege the towers erected by the enemy would command these places.

19. *Our persecutors are...*] Our pursuers (i.3 note) were *swifter than the eagles of heaven, they pursued us*] Or, *they chased us, mountains...wilderness*] The route in going from Jerusalem to Jericho leads first over heights, beginning with the Mount of Olives, and then descends into the plain of the Ghôr.

20. *The breath of our nostrils*] Zedekiah is not set before us as a vicious king, but rather as a man who had not strength enough of character to stem the evil current of his times. And now that the state was fallen he was as the very breath of life to the fugitives, who would have no rallying point without him.

in their pits] The words are metaphorical, suggesting that Zedekiah was hunted like a wild animal, and driven into the pitfall.

21, 22. The prophet ends his elegy with

22 (7) ¹The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O ¹Isai. 40.2
 daughter of Zion ;
 He will no more carry thee away into captivity :
²He will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom ;
 IIe will ²discover thy sins.

²Ps. 127. 7.

CHAP. 5. ^aREMEMBER, O LORD, what is come upon us :
 Consider, and behold ^bour reproach.
 2 ^cOur inheritance is turned to strangers,—our houses to aliens.
 3 We are orphans and fatherless,—our mothers *are* as widows.
 4 We have drunken our water for money ;
 Our wood ^dis sold unto us.
 5 ^dOur necks *are* under persecution :
 We labour, *and* have no rest.
 6 ^eWe have given the hand ^fto the Egyptians, *and* to the Assyrians,
 To be satisfied with bread.
 7 ^gOur fathers have sinned, *and* ^hare not ;
 And we have borne their iniquities.
 8 ⁱServants have ruled over us :
 There is none that doth deliver us out of their hand.

^aPs. 89. 50.
^bPs. 79. 4.
^cch. 2. 15.
^dPs. 79. 1.
^eDeut. 28. 43.
^fJer. 23. 14.
^gGen. 24. 2.
^hJer. 1. 15.
ⁱHos. 12. 1.
^jJer. 31. 20.
^kEzek. 18. 2.
^lGen. 42. 13.
^mZech. 1. 6.
ⁿNeh. 5. 15.

¹ Or, *Thine iniquity.* ² Or, *carry thee captive for* ³ Heb. *cometh for price.* ⁴ Heb. *On our necks are we persecuted.*

the language of Messianic hope. The earthly king had fallen (v. 20); but Israel cannot really perish. First then Edom, the representative of the Church's foes, is ironically told to rejoice. Rejoice she did at the capture of Jerusalem (Jer. xl ix. 7-22); but her punishment is quickly to follow.

22. *The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished.* Lit. *Thy iniquity is ended.* This is the result of Judah having borne her punishment. And as it is not just to punish twice for the same thing, therefore Jeremiah adds, *He will not send thee again into captivity*; not meaning that under all circumstances Judah would have immunity from exile;—for that would depend upon her future conduct:—but that her present guilt being expiated, she would have nothing to fear on its account.

he will discover thy sins] See marg. As Edom rejoices when the Church is chastised, so is the day of the Church's triumph that also on which the wicked meet with retribution.

V. This final chapter consists of the same number of verses as there are letters in the Hebrew alphabet, but they no longer begin with the letters in regular order. Strict care is shewn in the form and arrangement of the poem, each verse being compressed into a very brief compass, consisting of two members which answer to one another both in idea and expression. It is mainly occupied with the recapitulation of sufferings (vv. 2-18), and finally closes with earnest prayer.

1. *what is come upon us*] Lit. *what has happened to us*: our national disgrace.

2. *turned*] *transferred.* The inheritance was the land of Canaan (Lev. xx. 24).
aliens] Or, *foreigners*: *i.e.* the Chaldeans upon their conquest of the country.

3. *our mothers are as widows*] The particle *as* suggests that the whole verse is metaphorical. Our distress and desolation is comparable only to that of fatherless orphans or wives just bereaved of their husbands.

4. Better as in marg. *cometh to us for price.* The rendering of the A. V. spoils the carefully studied rhythm of the original. The bitterness of the complaint lies in this, that it was their own property which they had to buy.

5. *Our necks &c.*] *i.e.* we were pursued so actively that our enemies seemed to be leaning over our necks ready to seize us.

we labour] *We were wearied, there was no rest for us*: being chased incessantly.

6. *To give the hand* means to submit oneself. Absolutely it was Babylon that had just destroyed their national existence, but Jeremiah means that all feelings of patriotism were crushed, and the sole care that remained was the desire for personal preservation. To secure this the people would readily have submitted to the yoke either of Egypt or Assyria, the great powers from which in their past history they had so often suffered.

7. *and are not; and we...*] Or, *they are not; we have borne their iniquities.* Our fathers who began this national apostacy died before the hour of punishment.

8. *Servants*] *i.e.* *Slaves.* A terrible degradation to a high-spirited Jew.

9 We get our bread with *the peril of our lives*
Because of the sword of the wilderness.

² Job 30. 30.
Ps. 119. 83.
¹ Isai. 13. 10.
Zech. 14. 2.
^m Isai. 47. 0.
ch. 4. 16.
ⁿ Judg. 16. 21.

10 Our ^kskin was black like an oven
Because of the ^lterrible famine.

11 ^lThey ravished the women in Zion,
And the maidens in the cities of Judah.

12 Princes are hanged up by their hand :
"The faces of elders were not honoured.

13 They took the young men ^mto grind,
And the children fell under the wood.

14 The elders have ceased from the gate,
The young men from their musick.

15 The joy of our heart is ceased ;
Our dance is turned into mourning.

16 ^o2The crown is fallen ^pfrom our head :
Woo unto us, that we have sinned !

17 For this ⁿour heart is faint ;
^qFor these *things* our eyes are dim.

18 Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate,
The foxes walk upon it.

19 Thou, O LORD, ^rremainest for ever ;
^sThy throne from generation to generation.

20 ^tWherefore dost thou forget us for ever,
And forsake us ^uso long time ?

21 ^vTurn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned ;
Renew our days as of old.

22 ^wBut thou hast utterly rejected us ;
Thou art very wroth against us.

¹ Or, *terrors, or, storms.*

² Heb. *The crown of our*

^head is fallen.

³ Heb. *for length of days?*

⁴ Or, *For wilt thou utterly
reject us?*

9. *We get*] Or, *We get our bread at the peril of our lives.* This verse apparently refers to those who were left in the land, and who in gathering in such fruits as remained, were exposed to incursions of the Bedawin, here called *the sword of the desert.*

10. *Our skin &c.*] Or, *is fiery red like an oven because of the fever-blast of famine.*

11. *They ravished.*] They humbled.

12. After the princes had been put to death their bodies were hung up by the hand to expose them to public contumely. Old age, again, no more availed to shield men from shameful treatment than the high rank of the princes. Such treatment of conquered enemies was not uncommon in ancient warfare.

13. *They took the young men to grind.*] Or, *The young men have borne the mill, a menial and laborious task usually performed by slaves* (cp. Isai. xlvi. 2).

the children fell under the wood.] Or, *lads have stumbled under burdens of wood.* By lads are meant youths up to the age of military service; another form of menial labour.

14. *the gate.*] The gate was the place for public gatherings, for conversation, and the music of stringed instruments.

16. Lit. *The crown of our head is fallen,*

i.e. that which was our chief ornament and dignity is lost ;—the independence of the nation, and all that gave them rank and honour.

17. *is faint &c.*] Or, *has become faint—have become dim.* *For this,* i.e. for the loss of our crown &c.

18. *the foxes.*] Or, *jackals.* As these animals live among ruins, and shun the presence of man, it shews that Zion is laid waste and deserted.

19. *remainest*] Or, *reignest.* The earthly sanctuary is in ruins, but the heavenly throne in unchangeable glory.

22. Lit. *Unless thou hast utterly rejected us, unless thou art very wroth against us.* This is stated as a virtual impossibility. God's anger can be but temporary (Ps. xxx. 5), and therefore the very supposition is an indirect expression of hope.

This verse speaks of the possibility of an utter rejection through God's wrath. Therefore, to remove so painful a thought, and to make the Book more suited for public reading, v. 21 is repeated in many MSS. intended for use in the synagogue. The same rule is observed in the synagogue with the two last verses of Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, and Malachi.